

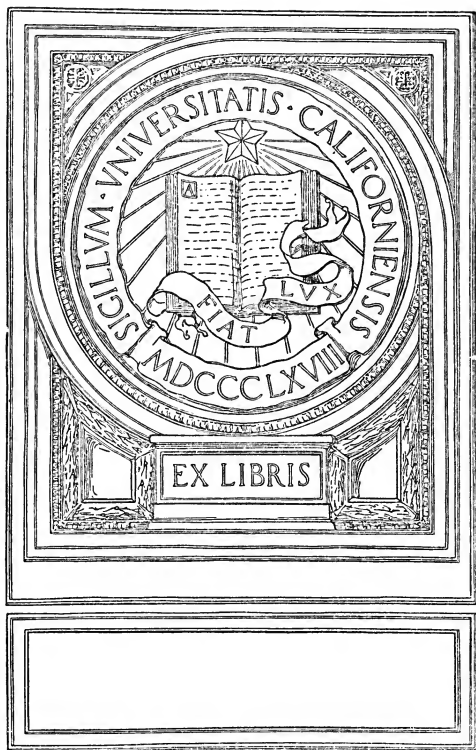
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THE
SACRIFICE OF ISABEL:

A POEM.

BY

EDWARD QUILLINAN, ESQ.



Love leads the will to desperate undertakings. *Shakesp.*

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1816.

TO THE
ATTENTION OF THE
DIRECTOR OF THE
BUREAU OF THE
LAND OFFICE

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TO

SIR EGERTON BRYDGES, BART. K.J. M.P.

&c. &c.

MY DEAR SIR EGERTON,

IN obtruding these verses upon the public, I am willing to give them the best introduction I can; and therefore I place them under your protection. Of their faults your benevolence will, I know, lead you to judge with lenity; and their more meritorious passages, if any such there be, you will estimate not only with partiality as a friend, but with enthusiasm as a poet. These lines properly belong to you, because they were written in the Library of Lee Priory—a place endeared to me by many associations, and where, through your friendship, some of the happiest hours of my life have been passed. Some persons might perhaps enquire whether I meant to include among those happy hours the time employed in a composition of so melancholy a cast as the Sacrifice of Isabel? You will not ask this question. You, as a poet, well understand how a mind accustomed to sorrowful impres-

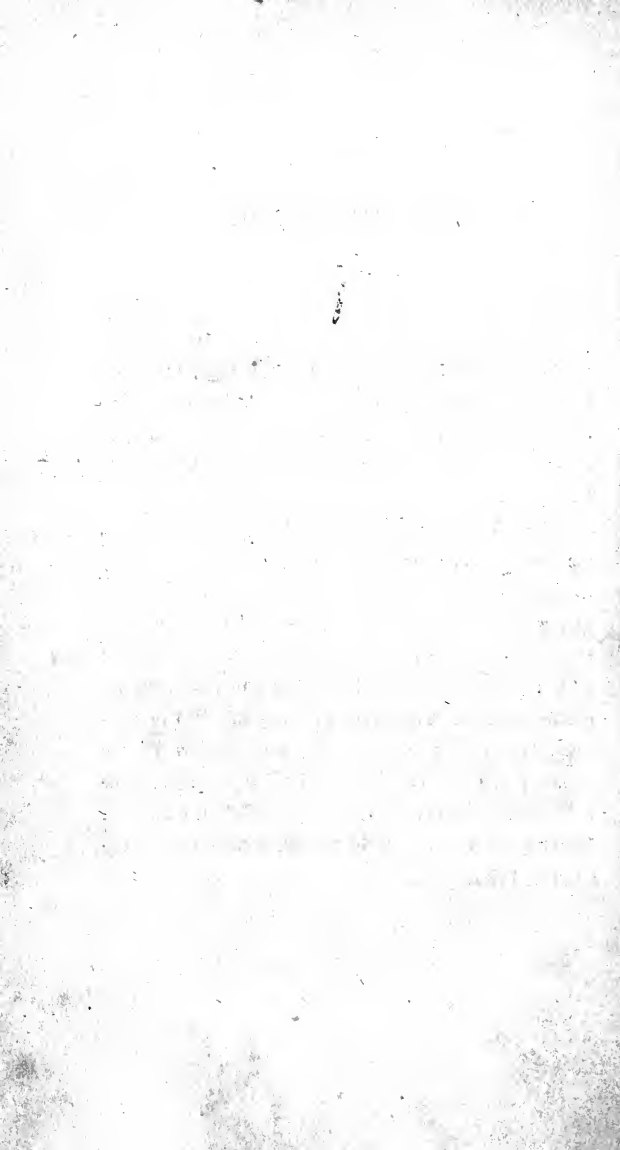
sions, whether from constitutional susceptibility or from incidental misfortune, can find a consolatory interest in the most mournful exercises of imagination. As to the particular subject which I have selected, it is not necessary here to explain any reason that may have actuated my choice. It is an endeavour to describe, with energy and simplicity, natural feelings in trying situations. I know how difficult a task I have undertaken, and am far from having the arrogance to suppose I have succeeded in the execution. On the contrary, I certainly have not at all equalled even my own conception of what might be done with such a subject. Still, to deny that I hope I have not entirely failed, would be an affectation, of which my committing the attempt to the press, and inscribing it to you, would sufficiently convict me. But while I thus connect your name with my production, I most assuredly have not the vanity to presume that either this, or any production of which I am capable, can be worthy of the distinction.

EDWARD QUILLINAN.

London, April 1816.

THE ARGUMENT.

IN the Spring of 1814, two Strangers, a Lady and a Gentleman, were disembarked with a few domestics on a small and thinly inhabited Island in the Mediterranean, not many leagues distant from the Isle of Elba. They excited some curiosity, which was subsequently much increased by a singular occurrence that happened to them, during the Autumn of the same year, in consequence of a visit paid to the Island by Napoleon Buonaparte. A very short time ago, the gentleman having been with considerable difficulty traced to his retirement by the affectionate exertions of a brother, who had recently returned from America, was persuaded to reveal the cause which had originally led him to seek, and that which still induced him to retain, his romantic seclusion. Though he evidently laboured to command his emotion, and was not immethodical in the greater part of his narrative, yet his deportment, at some particular moments of the recital, almost indicated insanity. His story, as thus related by himself, is the subject of the following Poem.



THE
SACRIFICE OF ISABEL.

THE day approach'd, by despot rage decreed,
To see a fair and royal victim bleed.
The bigot monarch, captive to the Gaul,
Had borne unmov'd the weary days of thrall;
Unrous'd to wrath while Battle's distant yell
Told how for Him a struggling people fell;
But when that people burst Invasion's yoke;
Redeem'd their soil; their Monarch's fetters broke;
And bore him back in triumph to the throne,
Whence the dull wretch to be a slave had flown;
Then the loos'd Savage, as a kingly meed,
Gave their best blood to bathe the land they freed.

That Tree of Liberty, they strove to rear,

He thought to wither with the deeds of fear.

Vain Man! such tree more hardily will bud,

When cruel kings maintain its roots with blood.

Of all adjudg'd, for patriot perils dar'd,

The chain, the galley, or the block's reward,

Mark'd for the last, Ramiro's noble name

Was most familiar to the tongue of fame.

Not his a breast where feeling calmly beams;

Whate'er he felt, he felt in mad extremes.

Proud as the war-horse, and more wildly fierce,

Where his hate fell, his vengeance there would pierce.

Breasts that are cast in Nature's common mould

Can but, at once, one ruling passion hold.

If two start up, the weight of one will fail,

And that or this preponderate the scale.

But some men scorn this absolute control

Of one imperious passion o'er the soul.

Them with like force e'en rival passions move:

He that can hotly hate can madly love.

Ramiro loved. His lofty hope aspir'd
To wed the royal nymph by royal eyes desir'd.
Such whisper'd tale at least had gain'd repute,
With rumour join'd of his rejected suit.
And sure, if true, the wonder were not great,
So bright a maid should shun so dark a mate.
Love, as it fairest buds in Beauty's breast,
Is a soft blossom, easily opprest ;
A flower so finely, delicately sweet,
'T will rarely live in close and stormy heat.
But gentle arts, and unimpatient care,
Must guard the pure fresh elegance there.
Like the young myrtle, emblem of its kind,
It must be shelter'd from the boreal wind ;
Fed with the fostering dew of tender sighs,¹
And the clear sunshine of unclouded eyes.

When war had ceas'd, Ramiro scarcely saw
The King turn'd tyrant, ere he spurn'd his law.
Proscrib'd, rebellion's standard he unfurl'd,
And, for his Sovereign's threats, defiance hurl'd :

Till, in the toils surpris'd, his forfeit life
Was sentenc'd as the penalty of strife.
But, on the eve of his appointed doom,
There broke a light upon his prison's gloom ;
There came a voice, in terror's hurried key,
That bade him rise, rush forward, and be free.
He rose, and in his strange preserver view'd
The noble maid to whom his vows had sued.
Whether mere pity urg'd her for his lot,
Or Fame was false that said she lov'd him not,
In that bright form his guardian genius came,
And work'd his rescue from the death of shame.
He fled: but when the raving monarch sought
By whom the bold deliverance was wrought,
She dared the venturous deed her own aver,
Too greatly just to let infliction err.
Blind to the worth of candour so sublime,
Truth, in the tyrant's thought, but swell'd the crime,
And deaf to kindred's, deaf to honour's call,
He doom'd the generous Isabel to fall.

To me her charge was given in Ala's Tower:²
Ah! we had met before in happier hour!
Like the Magnolia³ shining in the wood,
Mid the dark daughters of the land she stood;
With swan-white limbs, by contrast doubly bright,
She walk'd among them as a shape of light:
Her mien, majestic as became her race,
Was temper'd with a sweet benignant grace.
Pure o'er her spotless cheek, with wavering glow,
A coy suffusion wander'd to and fro;
So clear, as if the Sun on that chaste tint
Had never dared one kiss too warm to print:
So soft, as if one passing breath of heaven
Too rudely never o'er that cheek had driven.
Around her brow the light long tresses wreath'd;
Around her lips eternal perfumes breath'd;
As if young Love had twined, in sportive show,
Those locks to mimic his pernicious bow;
As if young Love for ever o'er her hung,
And from his wings perennial odours flung.

The very sound of her delicious voice
Made the heart leap, and giddily rejoice.
But paleness sometimes sat upon her lip,
As if young Love delighted thence to sip,
And be by that ambrosial theft repaid
For all his treasures lavish'd on the Maid.

Such in the palace of her Sires she bloom'd.
How look'd she now, a victim tried and doom'd?
Now, by the black calamity beset,
Her air was pensive, but 'twas royal yet.
Misfortune stamps a nobler mark on worth,
Than ever deck'd the pageantry of birth.
Oft, on the rampire of that sea-beat tower,
While slow she paced the lone and dismal hour,
I gaz'd upon her till my throbbing brain
Seem'd splitting with its agony of pain.
Oft, when her look met mine, the meaning there
Would seem to tax me with a calm despair.
Her eye would downward glance upon the sea,
Then turn, and fix its full appeal on me.

There was a quiet language in its ray,
That seem'd with mild upbraiding thus to say :
“ From Thee at least, in her extremest grief,
“ Unhappy Isabel might claim relief!
“ Full many a prow awakes yon ocean's spray,
“ And will not one waft Isabel away?
“ Yon ocean laves full many a cavern'd rock,
“ And is there none to screen her from the block?”
Fair Sufferer, yes! ev'n then within my breast
The yearning hope was stubbornly repress;
Because I durst not mock her with a joy,
The least of million chances might destroy.
But I too look'd along that waste of ocean,
With thoughts whose tempest match'd its worst commotion.
While the slow searing tortures of suspense
With every pang afflicted every sense.
It came at last!—'t were needless now to tell
By what good work of mine the blessing fell—
It came! all gallant winging o'er the wave,
The Sail, whose flag announc'd, 'twas come to save

Yet, yet, I waited for the still of night;
Then sought the Princess, to conduct her flight.
She spoke no word, she look'd no doubt, but mute
And passive, following stept with eager foot.
We gain'd the beach : the air was calm and soft,
The gracious Moon superbly rode aloft,
Myriads of stars from Heaven's blue mantle beam'd,
And all, commix'd, a sheet of splendour stream'd,
Which sweetly lay in a refulgent sleep,
On the broad bosom of the burnish'd deep.
In breathless haste the' attending boat to reach,
We glided o'er the silvery-spangled beach.
What scenes and sounds of visionary fear
Arise to Flight's fantastic eye and ear!
Did but a far-off billow dully hum,
I thought I heard the fell pursuers come :
Frown'd but a broken crag in deeper shade,
I thought I saw them burst from ambushade.
Behind a jutting cliff the pinnace lay,
The blest resource we reach'd, and bore away.

Illustrious Isabel beside me sat,
Pale as the Moon, and still as dumb as that :
No gleam of joy across her features flush'd,
But every feeling seem'd profoundly hush'd.
I held her hand, and gazed upon her cheek,
And felt as 't were impiety to speak.
It was an awful, superstitious hour ;
I was weigh'd down by some mysterious power
The measured cadence of the rowers' stroke
Was all the sound that o'er the waters broke
But e'en that sound was terrible to me,
And cold I shudder'd as it dash'd the sea ;
Lest it should rouse from slumber into wrath
Some angry Genius of the liquid path,
Whose hand might sweep us back from his domain,
And render up sweet Isabel again.
Secure at length we reach'd the destined mark,
Where faithful linger'd the expecting Bark.
In stately trim it lay, and gallant grace,
Like a proud steed impatient for the race.

A breeze had freshen'd as from shore we drew,
And now propitious to our course it blew.
One bitter moment look'd we tow'rd the land ;
One grateful moment on our zealous band ;
Then left the deck. With Isabel withdrawn,
I watch'd her now to see the rapture dawn
Of freedom on her cheek. Like one entranc'd
She sat ; then round her somewhat strangely glanc'd ;
Then fix'd again her eyes with earnest stare,
As if in question to some shape of air.
With anxious watch upon her look I hung ;
For yet no syllable had pass'd her tongue.
But now once more the statue seem'd to glow,
The long-suspended faculties to flow,
And wake her quivering lips and glistening eyes :
And smiles to form, and tears began to rise.
On me she cast those orbs so dewy beaming,
Their lustrous blue through fair long lashes gleaming :
With sense so full, so touching were they fraught,
Millions of words had less convey'd her thought ;

Till with faint sob, and passionate wild air,
She sunk upon my breast, and hid them there.
Dear deep remembrance! ne'er to be eras'd,
When lip to lip, and heart to heart embrac'd.
Our hearts had long ere this together beat,
But ne'er before had dared thus close to meet;
Our lips, ere this, had long exchange'd their vow
But never seal'd the blessed bond till now;
Because I knew our love involv'd her fate,
While yet she glitter'd in her walk of state.
Besides I felt the jealous forms of men,
And my own pride repress presumption then,
And taught me to look up with hopeless gaze,
And such wrought feeling as the Bard surveys
Some brightest planet in the midnight sky,
So fair to view, beyond his reach so high!
But now—what were all idle forms to us?
Thanks to the tyrant who had work'd it thus.
Nature was now our law; and bade our love
Be free, but chaste as that of saints above

And free and chaste it was ; more chaste, more free,
Than ever love has been, or ever more shall be.

On the Tyrrhenian wave our course we bore,
Midst laughing Islands dear to classic lore :
Till, on the second morn, we reach'd this Isle,
Loveliest of all on Ocean's cheek that smile.
Here we debark'd ; the rude sequester'd spot,
Where royal Beauty was to live forgot :
Where she who knew of statelier things so well,
Child of the Wilderness was now to dwell ;
Dead to the world, its tumult and its stir,
Yes, dead to all but One ; but He was all to Her.
The Sun had not arisen ;⁴ but now, afar,
Announced his coming by his herald star.
I climb'd with Isabel yon rocky height,
To greet the glorious minister of light.
The clear horizon distant lay below
On ocean's bound, and now began to glow.
Quick sprightly strokes of crimson flush'd the East,
And every instant busily increased

Broad spreading, and more broad, and high, and higher,
Till all the orient seem'd a blaze of fire.

Still the Sun linger'd, still we watch'd the flame,
And thought him tardy, when at length he came.

A ray, abrupt as lightning, sprung on high,
Shot through all space, fill'd earth, and sea, and sky;

The veil of darkness fell from Nature's face,

And all around was light, and life, and grace!

Our eyes could now this new abode command,

And fair we found it as a fabled land.

So wildly lay each verdant thing that grew,

Beneath its silver net of sparkling dew;

So wild its rocks; hills, woods, and founts so wild;

And, in the new-born day, so young and fresh it smiled.

The strange sea-mews, on wings of triumph borne,

Circled about the waves, and welcomed Morn.

The wild-goats wantonly from rock to rock

Bounded, a gladsome desultory flock.

The small birds warbling forth with quivering throat,

Together raised the universal note:

Not one amidst the parti-colour'd suit,
Of all the island choristers, was mute;
All join'd their various voices without number,
Soft from the languor of their peaceful slumber.
Hast thou ne'er felt, in such an hour as this,
A bounding elasticity of bliss?
Hast thou not felt a buoyant influence roll
In tides of freshening transport on thy soul?
Perchance thou hast; but still it is not thine
To know what bliss was Isabel's and mine.
Thou shouldst have been, like Her, a thing constrain'd
By forms and trammels which her soul disdain'd;
Girt with the heartless state, the gorgeous gloom,
The cold blank pomp that greatness must assume.
Then, hurried in the sudden earthquake shock
Of grandeur from the palace to the block,
Within a dungeon's walls been cast, to wait,
Shut from all hope, the' impending stroke of fate.
Or else thou should'st have been, as I had been,
A heart-sick actor in the shifting scene.

A soldier call'd to fill the courtier's place,
Yet less than flatter'd by the Monarch's grace;
Encumber'd with the honours I despised,
And wanting nothing but the thing I prized;
Knowing that quarry far beyond my aim,
Yet burning still to snatch the eagle game.
Then shouldst thou have endured the pangs I felt,
While in that tower my sentenc'd captive dwelt;
While I in vain to iron ears was suing,
Kneeling, imploring, to avert her ruin;
The tears, the rage, the anguish, and the dread—
Till Ocean took her to his sheltering bed.
All this should'st thou have felt, ere thou wilt guess
How present pleasure fed on past distress.
The morning sun thy mantling blood may warm,
The morning green thy ranging eye may charm,
Its breeze of health new powers of life dispense,
Its flowers of balm intoxicate thy sense;
But thou wilt never feel how Nature's spell
On every nerve of our's that morning fell.

Soft as her dew it dropp'd in cordial showers,
Fresh as her gales, and fragrant as her flowers ;
And fill'd the brain, the trembling bosom fill'd,
Inspir'd the fancy, and the spirit thrill'd.

A priest our hands united. Conquering gold
Made our's the Hermitage you here behold.
Haunt of romantic loneliness! and fit
For hearts like our's in holiest union knit.
Here, where a Saint had communed with his God,
Two faithful Lovers the retirement trod.
Say you that Love profaned devotion's shrine?
No, not such love as Isabel's and mine.
Five summer moons of peace, abode we here,
Nor deem inertness made seclusion drear.
We both had known the vanities of earth ;
How fondly hunted and how little worth.
Worldly experience is a plant of bane,
Whence skilful hands may wisdom's essence drain.
We from experience saving wisdom drew,
And bade without a sigh the world adieu.

Ev'n here we found abundance to employ
The body and the mind in tasks of joy.
Mind is omnipotent ; no fate, nor force
Of foreign will can check or rule its course.
'Tis free of worlds beyond this lesser Ball,
Through all expatiates and enjoys them all.
When link'd with love 't is only doubly free ;
Could languor reach then Isabel and me ?
But, for the body's share of life, look round
This fair-array'd, though now neglected ground.
'T was Isabel, the Island's floral queen,
Made yonder garden an elysian scene.
And that old jessamine, so broad and tall,
By Her was train'd yet more to walk the wall ;
And through our lattices at morn to peep,
And waft its fragrance on our couch of sleep.
That mountain stream was mutely wont to gush ;
'Twas I who taught it o'er those rocks to rush,
And all but dash with its terrific power
The green asylum of yon peaceful bower.

Bower, once more dear than all the island growth!

That was embellish'd by the hands of both.

Both planted there the shoots of laurel-thyme,

Both urg'd the humble rosemary to climb,

Both bade the' ambitious clematis ascend,

Both woo'd the branching mastich-tree to bend,

Both rais'd the seat within its twilight charms,

And both lay transc'd there in each other's arms.

But five brief moons ! alas, how short a span
To measure the felicity of Man !

But five brief moons ! and could it come to this ?

So suddenly ingulph'd in the abyss

Of frightful ruin ! At the period too,

When most delightful to my soul she grew.

Ev'n at the time she first began to prove

The sweet infirmity of blissful love.

When the deep-drawn and oft-repeated sigh,

The charming languor of the dim blue eye,

The lip of wanness so divinely meek,

The flush of fever o'er the pallid cheek,

The taste's unus'd fastidiousness of choice,
The dear half-querulous faint tone of voice,
The flow of spirits, check'd with sudden pause,
The burst of tears without external cause,
All, all confirm'd the husband's fondest hope;
All gave my fancy's sanguine temper scope;
And I already with new feelings smil'd
On the sweet mother of my unborn child.
At such a time, to meet with such a lot!
Oh, 't was a bitter trial, was it not?

There came a Sloop one morning tow'rd the shore,
Whose flag proclaim'd 't was Elba's Chief it bore.
Yonder he landed, and I hasten'd down
To meet the wond'rous man of wide renown;
And shew the due observance of his name,
To which fal'n greatness bears a tenfold claim.
His brow was meditative, not severe;
To all he lent a quick and courteous ear;
And though he lack'd not dignity of mien,
A stranger scarce had guess'd what he had been;

A brand of fire amid the nations tost,
A man to talk of empires won and lost.
Throughout this quarter of the Isle his guide,
I shew'd my little realm with conscious pride,
And then conducted Him and His to share
Within my rural dwelling simple fare.
Thither, our guest's degree and object learn'd,
Direct had Isabel at first return'd.
I almost wonder'd at the' incurious haste,
Yet deem'd it care to deck her board with taste.
And so we found it deck'd. The warrior shar'd,
Well pleas'd, the little banquet thus prepar'd.
And so assail'd with phrase gallant the while
My lovely bride, as oft to force my smile.
But she, though courteous as became her birth,
Seem'd little prone to mingle in the mirth.
In vain to shed the light of smiles she strove,
To something foreign seem'd her thoughts to rove,
And once her look was tow'rd the casement thrown,
With glance so strange as thither call'd my own.

I thought I saw an eye thence glaring on,
Which at the instant, meteor-like, was gone.
I rose, and sought the portal, but could see
No outward form confirming mystery ;
And so dismiss'd the thought, and deem'd my bride
But felt some trivial ill she now would hide.
At length our Guest declin'd protracted stay,
And all of mine accompanied his way,
(Save Isabel, whom choice within detain'd,)
And now the Chief his landing-place had gain'd,
When, as he turn'd to quit me and embark,
First some companion's absence drew remark.
" Where is our sullen Wanderer? hath his mood
" Here seiz'd him, o'er his wrongs and rage to brood?
" Well; let him join us in his hour of peace;
" Kind host, farewell! we wait not his caprice."
I knew not wherefore every casual word
Knock'd at my heart determin'd to be heard.
I knew not wherefore, when his boat withdrew,
Back to our dwelling wing'd by fear I flew ;

Some black foreboding whisper'd things of hell,
Though how, or why, or whence, I could not tell.
But when I reach'd that dwelling's half-shut door,
I shrunk, and stopp'd, as if to move no more ;
My blood, before all fire, all ice became ;
The breathing sense of life forsook my frame ;
My eyes and ears alone their power enjoy'd,
But they, O Heaven ! intensely were employ'd.
For I beheld Ramiro standing there
Before my wife, with wild disorder'd air.
How came he here ? and thus mysterious too !
The only man on earth I loath'd to view ?
He who had lov'd her, He whom she had freed,
Though her own head was forfeit for the deed !
There was no time for reason's calm control ;
For some infernal frenzy ruled my soul.
Forgive me, first of Angels, that, e'en now,
I dare the' accurs'd apostacy avow :
Though but one moment of a mind insane
Dash'd thy white virtue with suspicion's stain !

That worst of fears was speedily dispell'd ;

For thus I heard the dialogue they held.

“ Away, Ramiro ; if, as thou hast said,

“ By chance alone thy course was hither led,

“ O fly, nor let thy mad and stormy suit

“ The quiet fountain of my peace pollute.

“ Have I not own'd myself with joy the wife

“ Of Him whose generous daring sav'd my life ?

“ He is my all on earth. Thy very sight

“ His noble nature's tenderness may blight.

“ Thou wert his Rival ; now thou canst not be ;

“ I am all his ; yet have some claims on thee.

“ This morn I shunn'd thee, as I hoped unseen ;

“ But anxious dread has since my torment been.

“ My soul had thank'd thee for thine absence here,

“ Since yet, it seems, he knows not thou art near.

“ But wherefore come, like an insidious spy,

“ And watch us at the board with jealous eye !

“ And wherefore now unworthily intrude

“ On a weak woman's helpless solitude ?

“ O fly for ever hence, and with thee bear
“ My truest blessing and my friendliest prayer.
“ I trust thy gallant mind : for well I know,
“ Thou wilt not deign betray us to a foe.”

“ And think'st thou, Lady, then, Ramiro born
“ To deign endure thy pity or thy scorn?
“ Thou art another's. I am basely wrong'd.
“ Was it for this thy care my life prolong'd?
“ Had not my long-told love the elder right?
“ He, like a robber, seiz'd thee in thy flight.
“ But learn, how little can my soul forgive
“ Thee, or a hated rival, while I live.”

He drew a dagger from beneath his vest,
And rous'd the dormant fury in my breast.
I rush'd upon him, grasp'd him by the throat,
And cried : “ Dark villain, what may this denote?”

“ Villain?” with strangled voice he echoed back,
“ What slanderous Idiot dares the rash attack?
“ Hah ! is it so ? by hell, we' are bravely met ;
“ Take that ! in token of Ramiro's debt.”

Full at my breast he thrust the deadly stroke :

The hand of Isabel its fury broke ;

And mock'd its point, which, glancing, reach'd my arm,

Inflicting there a wound of slight alarm.

I loos'd my hold to wrench his weapon's hilt ;

But to the earth he flung the tool of guilt,

And thus exclaim'd : " Why this is foully done !

" Here is indeed a tragedy begun.

" Why didst thou come, to damn to after-time

" Ramiro's honour with so base a crime ?

" How couldst thou dream I came to seek the life

" Of Her or thee, with an assassin's knife ?

" O not for thee ! O not for her 'twas meant ;

" I bore that dagger with a high intent.

" It was design'd the despot pride to quell

" Of one who would have murder'd Isabel.

" To reach that sceptred tyranny accurst,

" Which would have drank our blood with greedy thirst.

" But ere the good time fell, a fatal chance

" Here threw me with the humbled boast of France.

- “ Mere visitors, in idle hour we came ;
“ Why did I stay to do this deed of shame !
“ Soon as my eyes the form I lov'd beheld,
“ Conflicting passions in my bosom swell'd.
“ She was the only thing in this wide earth
“ To which my heart attach'd intrinsic worth :
“ And I was now the certain fate to find
“ Of that high hope my soul had ne'er resign'd.
“ For this I sought the' occasion which a crowd
“ Of lingering strangers had but ill allow'd.
“ But soon my doom by Isabel was seal'd ;
“ Thy happier destiny, rash man, reveal'd.
“ And in the rage to think I owed my life
“ To the cold pity of my rival's wife ;
“ And in the rancour of my soul to shew
“ How I disdain'd a debt so mean to owe,
“ I drew that weapon from its close retreat,
“ By my own hand to perish at her feet.
“ But now, my lot is chang'd ; I will not die :
“ There will be one on earth as damn'd as I.

“ Thou, Isabel—nay, Lady, do not shrink—
“ Thou art bound with me by the’ immortal link
“ Of hopeless wretchedness! all hell’s black host
“ A pair more drunk with misery will not boast.
“ For know, that blood-discolour’d dagger there,
“ Dire as the scorpion in his hottest lair,
“ Hath an envenom’d sting, of power so deep,
“ Its veriest scratch insures eternal sleep.”

He said; and, like a comet of the night,
His eyes flash’d dreadful, and he swept from sight;
While Isabel glanc’d wildly on my wound;
And in my arms to marble coldness swoon’d.

O day of horror! chronicled in hell!

Its black catastrophe is yet to tell.

My bride, to sense restor’d, and full aware
Of the dark widowhood ’twas her’s to bear,
Now summon’d all the courage of her mind,
And seem’d a martyr gloriously resign’d.
On her sweet brow, in sad but high array,
The solemn calm of desperation lay;

So settled, and so passive, and so pale,
It seem'd some frightful mystery to veil.
Stretch'd on a couch I vainly sought repose ;
My wound began to shoot with ardent throes :
But the prompt hand of my attentive bride
A lulling potion to my thirst applied.
A soft oblivious slumber o'er me stole,
And a delightful vision charm'd my soul.
I dream'd I felt the agony of death ;
My spouse was watching o'er my fleeting breath ;
Imploring heaven, with sighs, and tears, and prayer,
But yet some transient space my days to spare.
Her Patron Angel at her grief descended,
His touch the dire mortality suspended,
Chas'd all my tremors, banish'd all my pain,
And life and health roll'd back through every vein.
The sudden transport caus'd my sleep to break :
But God ! O God ! to what did I awake !
There was indeed an Angel at my side—
My fond, heroic, dear, devoted bride.

Upon the floor she knelt beside my bed,
And o'er my out-stretch'd arm inclin'd her head.
Her lips—those cherub lips 'twas heaven to kiss,
Those soft delicious ministers of bliss,
Where everlasting fragrance freshly sprung,
Whence music breath'd, and where enchantment hung—
Those lips around my canker'd wound were glued,
And thence the poison with the gore imbued!
Yes, suck'd the rank infection of my blood,
And to the dregs drain'd forth the tainted flood!
I snatch'd my arm aside, with wild affright,
Yet hoped some fantasy deceiv'd my sight.
Ah no: it look'd too horrid to be true;
But 'twas no fantasy that mock'd my view.
My matchless Isabel had sign'd her fate,
And now all antidote was tried too late.
Saving my meaner life, her own was lost:
Who would have been immortal at such cost?
“ O Isabel,” I cried, “ my heart's sole joy,
“ How could'st thou thus my richer self destroy?

- “ Was not the thought a cruel one, to leave
“ Thy husband lonely upon earth to grieve ?
“ The infant of our hope, O doubly dire !
“ Must that too perish for its wretched Sire ?”
“ Cease, cease to chide,” rejoin’d the lovely saint,
In mournful accent musically faint ;
“ O do not chide thine Isabel’s fond love,
“ I hoped a happier destiny to prove.
“ And sure all gentle souls with pity’s tear
“ The sacrifice of Isabel shall hear.
“ Castilian Eleanor,⁵ her Edward’s pride,
“ This deed of yore with happier fortune tried.
“ I knew, and know, I could not live a day,
“ Or save my child, when thou wert snatch’d away.
“ There was this one wild hope, to raise my heart ;
“ But ’tis the will of heaven that we should part.
“ Thou yet must live : I charge thee seek not death ;
“ Scorn not the life for which I forfeit breath.
“ Plant on my chosen grave our favorite flowers ;
“ My soul shall visit thee in moonlight hours.

“ How dark it grows ! yet I had more to tell.

“ ’ Tis gone. Come near—yet closer—Oh farewell !”

Thus did the royal Isabel expire ;

Thus was extinguish’d love’s sublimest fire.

Her lips, still true to love, breath’d out on mine

The last soft sigh that freed that soul divine.

O long, long lingering o’er her corse I hung ;

Long to those chilly lips with kisses clung.

Not that I thought life yet retain’d a ray ;

Not that I hoped to animate her clay.

No, no, despair was far less idly bent ;

I knew my utter misery’s full extent ;

And all I wish’d was to obtain release

From woe at once, and with her be at peace.

Not half so fondly Infancy e’er prest

Its vital milk from the maternal breast,

As I essay’d from that cold mouth to drain

The venom that had kill’d ; and might again ;

But, as the hope was impious, it was vain.

Heaven to my grief denied so short a cure ;

It was my fate to live, and to endure.

Twelve months are past ; and still I linger here ;
Though life is all I loath, and all I fear.
Death awes not me ; for in yon heaven above
I know there is a place for faithful love.
There shall I join my Isabel. Yet earth
Has, ev'n for me, one spot of cherish'd worth.
Come, follow if thou wilt ; and I will shew
This solitary shrine of jealous woe.
This is the way ; and hath not Nature well
Contriv'd this cypress path to sorrow's cell?
So narrow, dark, and intricate a maze
Secures my temple from unhallow'd gaze.
Here, here it is ! thus girt with rocks around ;
Gigantic forms, that guard the holy ground ;
Yet do not quite exclude the sun at noon,
Nor quite shut out the glances of the moon,
Nor quite deny the wandering winds to breathe
O'er the old trees that so fantastic wreath,
Nor quite forbid the showers of heaven to fall
On these fair plants thus spreading, like a pall

Of ever-springing blooms and lasting green,
O'er this most lovely and most mournful scene!
O mark that flowery mound ; that cross will tell,
Thine eyes behold the grave of Isabel.
Hither, how alter'd! by these arms was borne
The shape once warmer than the young May-Morn.
A priest alone assisting at the toil,
These hands dug out the consecrated soil.
Hide me that sight away! 'twas full of blots ;
Her livid lips were dark with purple spots;
Her cheeks were wan, and colourless, and cold
And all was ghastly horrid to behold!
No, 'twas more false than hell—it could not be
What, Isabel a ghastly thing to see?
Why, I believe 'twas all a treacherous dream ;
My sight was blear'd by wretchedness extreme ;
And so I fancied death had marr'd her face ;
But no! e'en yet it hath not wrong'd one grace.
Do not the flowers I've planted sweetly wave,
And the fresh grass sprout greenly o'er her grave?

She is, be sure, as fair and fresh as they :
Would I might move this covering earth away.
So sure am I her charms are perfect still,
I am half tempted with a strange wild will.
What if I should remove it?—'twere not much !
I'd not profane her reliques with a touch ;
But only gaze a little, little while :
Perchance her mien may yet retain its smile.
O mockery ! 'twas her soul, to heaven long fled,
That softly-dimpling radiation shed.
Why is my brain with dreams so monstrous vex'd,
One moment cheating, but to taunt the next ?
Dost thou not marvel I exist so long ?
Dost thou not think my heartstrings more than strong ?
Alas ! all other care-worn wretches die ;
But I seem damn'd with immortality.
Madness, they say, makes Misery long survive ;
I am not mad ; then why am I alive ?
Death, here of late, perform'd a tragic scene :
O that the chosen victim I had been !

It is my custom, at the dawn of day,
Here, at the grave of Isabel, to pray.
If aught akin to joy I yet can feel,
It is when o'er her ashes thus I kneel.
It tastes like pleasant bitterness, to think
The earth that covers her my tears should drink:
The flowers whose balm thence rising perfumes air,
On wings of odours seem to waft my prayer.
I think her spirit mingles with my moan,
And speeds it on the way to Mercy's Throne.
Scarce three weeks since, as thus I sought the spot,
A scene surpris'd me, ne'er to be forgot.
By what mysterious means he gain'd the clue
To this funereal shade, I never knew.
Whence he had come, where dragg'd the days, and how,
As it was then, remains a riddle now.
But there was One preoccupied my place,
Whom well I knew ere I beheld his face.
In lowly attitude, he knelt beside
The Cross erected o'er my murder'd Bride.

This was a sacrilege too foul to bear ;
My burning eyes look'd on with frantic glare,
And in that hour I wish'd they could have dealt
One look to blast the monster as he knelt.
“ Fiend,” I exclaim'd, “ Revenge thy blood demands !”
And flew to tear him with my naked hands.
He rais'd his look, that look so wont to awe ;
But, heavenly powers ! what man was this I saw ?
Was this Ramiro ? this the haughty Lord,
For stormy passions fear'd, for bloody deeds abhorr'd ?
Deep in their sockets his dull eyes were sunk ;
Under each orb a low black furrow shrunk ;
His cheeks were of a sallow bloodless hue ;
His lips were shrivell'd, and of hectic blue ;
Almost transparent were his skinny bones ;
His voice scarce utter'd low sepulchral tones ;
The pride, the fire, the fierceness, all were gone,
And left but an half-breathing skeleton.
He look'd too, as if like a churchyard sprite
He had kept vigil o'er this grave all night.

The dews were on him piteous to behold;
And he was shivering with unconscious cold.
Calmly he raised his look, his bosom bar'd:
"Where is thy weapon? strike; I am prepar'd."
Where was my weapon! ask'd the poor disguise?
Alas, the tears were streaming from my eyes.
O what a change! O what a wreck was here!
Was this a thing to slay, or hate, or fear?
Mute o'er the miserable man I stood,
And in him found a sort of brotherhood.
He read the silent thought my pity felt,
And "what!" said he, "can thy resentment melt?
"Tears too! for whom? thy most inveterate foe?
"Why, my heart lack'd but this concluding blow.
"It speaks thee worthy of thy martyr'd bride;
"I heard it all the very night she died.
"And be thou judge, if thy worst fury's force
"Had done thee vengeance like my own remorse.
"And be thou judge too, if so much indeed
"Ev'n thine own love thy rival's could exceed,

“ But we are brothers now. The tears that blind
“ Thy hatred, brighter shew thy generous mind.
“ Know’st thou I meant a brother’s boon to crave?
“ But ’tis secur’d—I die upon her grave.
“ I ask not in this pure and blessed haunt
“ A tomb—that were too much for thee to grant.”

I press’d his cold and clammy hand in mine,
That hand’s faint answer thank’d the friendly sign ;
His uprais’d eyes too with weak ray replied,
And, with a heavy groan, he sunk, and died.
Deep on my soul that groan’s expression fell,
A broken heart’s last melancholy knell.

The spirit cag’d within that stubborn heart
Could bravely burst its bondage, and depart.
O Isabel! enthron’d in bliss above,
Hast thou so far forgot thine earthly love,
That I am left thus desolate to pine,
And almost doubt if ever thou wert mine?
But, hush! what noise among those leaves is trembling?
What light is there no light of earth resembling?

What form of glory thence is seen to break?
Why! Isabel! art thou indeed awake?
Art thou in blest reality once more
Return'd, to bear me to the happy shore?
Where faithful hearts rejoin ne'er more to sever,
Where lovers live for ever and for ever.
O let me quickly clasp thee, heart to heart,
Magnificently beauteous as thou art!
But no: not yet: I will not dare so much
As greet thy robe of whiteness with a touch,
Lest, as I've heard it said, the' etherial ray
Of sacred Beauty straight should melt away,
Offended at the' approach of mortal clay.
O lead me far beyond this dismal bourne,
Lead to the realms of everlasting morn;
My soul already from its prison springs,
Already flutters on impatient wings,
Spurns its dull corporal load, bids earth farewell,
And welcomes love and heaven, and Isabel.

THE END.



N O T E S.

¹ Fed with the fostering dew of praise.---MASON.

² The name of Ala is fictitious.

³ *Magnolia Grandiflora*, commonly called greater Magnolia, or Tulip-tree. This superb tree is indigenous to Florida and South Carolina, where it rises to the height of eighty feet or more, with a straight trunk, upwards of two feet in diameter, having a large regular head. Its leaves resemble those of the common laurel, but are much larger, and of a shining green on their upper side, and in some trees they are of a russet, or buff colour, on their under side: these leaves continue all the year, so that this is one of the most beautiful evergreens known. In its native places of growth it begins to produce its pure white blossoms in May, and continues a long time in flower, perfuming the woods with its odour during the greater part of summer. It also grows in great beauty in some of the southern climates of Europe, though not to the height which it attains in America.---See MILLER.

⁴ Part of this description of sun-rise is imitated from a very eloquent passage in the *Emile* of Rousseau. I do not venture to say *translated*, because I am conscious how little I have done it justice in those lines where the imitation is most close.

⁵ Alluding to the story told of the wife of Edward the First, Eleanor of Castile, who is said, when her husband was stabbed with a poisoned dagger in Palestine, to have sucked out the poison from the wound, at the risk of her own life, while he slept.

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